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SECT 01 OF 54738
SECTIONS ONE AND TWOACTION SPECIAL ()
DISTR CJCS DJS CJCS(ADM MOORER)(05)1-5 J3(GEN ZAIS)(01)6
CSA J4(GEN WOOLWINE)(01)7 J5(ADM WEINEL)(01)8 DIA:
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CNC FILE(1)9

(001) ADDED DIST: SECDEF(MR LAIRD)(1)10 W/HOUSE(DR KISSINGER)(1)11
(MR KEARNEY/OCJCS)17APR72 LVADV DISTR CJCS TERMSVC
TRANSIT/171145Z/171437Z/002:52TOR1081326
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S E C R E T SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR ADM MCCAIN INFO ADM
MOORER FROM GEN ABRAMS

DELIVER DURING DUTY HOURS SEC 1 OF 2

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF FORCES IN MRI

1. FOLLOWING ARE SUBSTANTIVE EXTRACTS FROM A GENERAL ASSESSMENT
OF I CORPS FORCES IN MR 1 AS OF 15 APRIL SUBMITTED BY THE
CG, FRAC.

A. NORTHERN MR 1:

(1) 3D DIV, 2D AND 57TH REGIMENTS HAVE RECOVERED FAIRLY
WELL FROM THE INITIAL SHOCK OF COMBAT AND SHOULD PROVE EFFECTIVE
WHEN CALLED UPON AGAIN. FIELD STRENGTH OF THE REGIMENTS
AVERAGES 1700. (ON 30 MAR, STRENGTH AVERAGED 2000.) GEF GIAI
IS USING THESE REGIMENTS SPARINGLY WITH ONLY THE 2D ENGAGED IN
A MINOR ROLE IN THE CURRENT OFFENSIVE MOVES. THE 56TH REGT IS
INEFFECTIVE; IT REQUIRES REBUILDING AND RETRAINING AND IS NOW AT
DONG DA TRAINING CENTER FOR THIS PURPOSE. APPROXIMATELY 1000
MEN OF THE 56TH HAVE BEEN RECOVERED; ONE BN OF OVER 300 MEN CAME
OUT OF CARROL INTACT AND UNDER CONTROL.(2) 3D DIVISION ATTACHMENTS. 1ST ARMOR BDE (20TH TANK,
11TH AND 17TH CAV SQNS) IS IN EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD CONDITION, MORALE
IS HIGH, AND EQUIPMENT AVAILABILITY IS ACCEPTABLE. (20TH TANK
TOOK THE FIELD WITH 41 OPNL M 40'S, NOW HAS 39 WITH 9 MORE BEING
ISSUED BY IALC. PARTS ARE ON HAND FOR REPAIR OF 85 PERCENT OF
CURRENT DEADLINE AND THE 814TH MAINTENANCE IS WORKING EFFECTIVELY.)

PAGE 1

S E C R E T

00000001

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S E C R E T

54738

THE 258TH MARINE BDE HAS ACQUITTED ITSELF VERY WELL, THIER MORALE IS EXCELLENT, AND THEY ARE COMBAT READY. TWO HANGER GPS, ATTACHED LATE, HAVE NOT BEEN BATTLE TESTED, BUT APPEAR TO BE CAPABLE AND READY. ALTOGETHER, THESE ATTACHED UNITS ARE PROVIDING THE BASIC COMBAT POWER NOW BEING EMPLOYED BY GIAI AND THEY GIVE HIM A VERY EFFECTIVE FORCE.

(3) 1ST DIVISION OVERALL COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS IS GOOD; HOWEVER, ALL REGIMENTS HAVE BEEN ENGAGED TO SOME DEGREE IN OVER SIX STRAIGHTY WEEKS OF TOUGH COMBAT, AND ATTRITION AND WEARINESS HAVE HAD AN EFFECT. CASUALTIES AMONG LEADERS HAVE BEEN HEAVY AND TWO INFANTRY BATTALIONS HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO LOWER THAN 40 PERCENT STRENGTH. THE DIVISION REMAINS SOLID, HOWEVER, AND LTG LAM HAS SEEN NO REQUIREMENT TO REINFORCE. FINAL RESOLUTION OF THE BATTLE IN THE BASTOGNE AREA, WHICH STILL PROMISES TO BE AN ARVN SUCCESS, WILL PROVIDE A WELCOME MORALE BOOST FOR THE WHOLE DIVISION.

(4) 1ST MARINE DIVISION MORALE AND COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MARINES IS RATED VERY HIGH DESPITE HEAVY LOSSES IN PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT SUFFERED BY THE 147TH BDE DURING THE WITHDRAWAL FROM MAI LOC. THE WITHDRAWAL WAS A SUCCESSFUL OPERATION, AND THE 147TH, AFTER A RESPIRE IN HUE AS THE CORPS RESERVE, IS READY TO GO AGAIN. THE 396TH BEE IS IN GOOD CONDITION.

(5) RANGER DIVISION. TWO RANGER GROUPS UNDER A DIVISION COMMANDER ARE EMPLOYED IN A DEFENSIVE SECTOR NORTH OF HUE, WEST OF QL 1. THEY ARE EXCELLENT TROOPS, IN GOOD COMBAT CONDITION; HOWEVER, THEIR STRENGTH IS AS LOW AS 80 PERCENT OF AUTHORIZED IN SOME BATTALIONS. THEIR LACK OF ORGANIC ARTILLERY SUPPORT IS A WEAKNESS WHICH HAS CAUSED A THINNING OUT OF ARTILLERY SUPPORT FOR ALL OTHER UNITS (SEE BELOW). DESPITE THESE LIMITATIONS THEY CAN BE COUNTED ON CONFIDENTLY.

(6) ARTILLERY. LTG LAM AUGMENTED THE ARTILLERY AVAILABLE BY DRAWING FROM SOUTHERN MR I. INITIAL LOSSES OF 60 TUBES HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY 32. ADDITIONAL REPLACEMENT IS DESIRABLE, BUT PERSONNEL AND ARTILLERY EQUIPMENT LOSSES HAVE MADE THE RECONSTITUTION OF BATTERIES DIFFICULT. TO DATE 3 BATTERIES BELONGING TO 2 BATTALIONS HAVE BEEN RECONSTRUCTED AND RETURNED TO COMBAT. IN GENERAL, ARTILLERY IS DEPLOYED PROPERLY BUT LACKS OVERALL FIRE SUPPORT COORDINATION AT CORPS LEVEL, A SHORTCOMING NOT EASILY RECTIFIED BECAUSE THE CORPS ARTILLERY HEADQUARTERS IS NOT STAFFED FOR THIS ROLE. TROOP MORALE IS EXCELLENT AND COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS GOOD.

(7) AVIATION AND AIR SUPPORT. VNAF HELICOPTER SUPPORT HAS

PAGE 2

S E C R E T

00000001

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S E C R E T

54738

BEEN GOOD, BUT THE AVAILABILITY OF SHIPS HAS BEEN DISAPPOINTING, AVERAGING LESS THEN TWO-THIRDS OF AN EXPECTED 50 PERCENT ROUTING AVAILABILITY. VNAF FIXED WING SUPPORT HAS BEEN EXCELLENT AND VERY EFFECTIVE. USAF SUPPORT HAS BEEN OUTSTANDING AND IS A TREMEFDOUS BOOST TO MORALE WHEN USED WITHIN SIGHT OF ARVN GROUND TROOPS. WEATHER WAS A SERIOUS DETERRENT DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF APRIL AND THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST THE ENEMY DURING THIS PERIOD IS UNKNOWN BECAUSE OF INABILITY TO OBSERVE EITHER TARGETS OR RESULTS, AND BECAUSE THE CONTROL SYSTEM IS NOT GEARED TO INFORM GROUND COMMANDERS OF WHAT TARGETS HAVE BEEN STRUCK. VFR CONDITIONS WILL ALLEVIATE THIS SITUATION.

B. SOUTHERN MR I

(1) 2D DIVISION. ALL ELEMENTS OF THE 2D DIVISION ARE IN EXCELLENT CONDITION AND COMBAT READY EXCEPT FOR ONE BATTALION OF THE 5TH REGT WHICH SUFFERED VERY HEAVY LOSSES IN NORTHWEST QUANG TIN LAST WEEK. THE DIVISION'S COMBAT POWER HAS BEEN DEPLETED BY THE LOSS OF A 105 BN, A 155 BTY, A RANGER GROUP, A BORDER RANGER BN, AND ARMORED CAVALRY ELEMENTS WHICH WERE TRANSFERRED NORTH. THE COMMITMENT OF THE 711TH NVA DIVISION IN THE VICINITY OF HIEP DUC AND DUE SON CAUSED THE CONCENTRATION ON 2D DIVISION FORCES IN THAT AREA. THIS, COUPLED WITH THE MOVE OF TWO BNS TO QUANG NAM FOR THE DEFENSE OF DANANG, HAS SERIOUSLY DEPLETED ARVN FORCE AVAILABILITY IN QUANG TIN AND QUANG NGAI.

(2) 51ST REGT (SEP, QUANG NAM). THE 51ST IS AN EXCELLENT REGT, CAPABLE AND COMBAT READY. IT IS ENGAGING LOCAL EFEMY FORCES DAILY IN QUANG NAM AND ACQUITTING ITSELF WELL.

(3) ARTILLERY. THE 3 SOUTHERN PROVINCES HAVE ONLY 3 BNS OF 105 (-1 BTY), 1 BN OF 155, AND 1 BTY OF 175 ARTILLERY; HOWEVER, ALL CURRENT OPERATIONS ARE BEING ADEQUATELY SUPPORTED AND THESE UNITS ARE WELL TRAINED, MOTIVATED, AND COMBAT EFFECTIVE.

C. GENERAL COMMENTS.

(1) THERE ARE THREE HEARTENING DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ARE ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF I CORPS FORCES.

(A) FIRST, THE 3D DIVISION, WHICH SUFFERED MAJOR LOSSES, SETBACKS, AND SEEMING DISASTERS, DID NOT COLLAPSE OR DISAPPEAR. IT HAS INSTEAD REBOUNDED STRONGLY AND CAN STILL BE COUNTED AN EFFECTIVE FORCE.

(B) SECOND, INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS, SCATTERED AND LOST IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS, HAVE REAPPEARED VOLUNTARILY AND REJOINED THIER UNITS IN SURPRISING NUMBERS. UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF THE FIRST WEEK, DESERTION BY THESE MEN WOULD HAVE BEEN EASY AND UNDOUBTEDLY WAS FOR SOME, BUT MOST HAVE RETURNED FOR CONTINUED SERVICE.

(C) THIRD, UNITS OF THE 1ST DIVISION, WHICH HAVE BEEN IN

PAGE 3

S E C R E T

00000001

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S E C R E T

54738

HEAVY CONTACT SINCE EARLY MARCH, REMAIN EFFECTIVE AND DETERMINED
AND CONTINUE TO INFLICT HEAVY DAMAGE ON THE ENEMY AND TO DENY
HIM HIS OBJECTIVES. THIS APPEARS TO BE EQUALLY TRUE OF THE 5TH REGT,
20 DIVISION WHICH FOUGHT FOR A MONTH IN THE QUE SON MOUNTAINS AND
LATELY TOOK THE FULL BRUNT OF THE 711TH NVA DIVISION ATTACK IN
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SECT 02 OF 54738

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S E C R E T SPECAT EXCLUSIVE SECTION 2 OF 2
 QUANG TIN.

(2) IF THE ENEMY, AFTER THE PUNISHMENT HE HAS ABSORBED IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS IS CAPABLE OF ANOTHER ASSAULT OF THE SAME AMGNITUDE ON THE 3D OR 1ST DIVISIONS, THE CURRENT COMBAT SITUATION OF THESE UNITS MIGHT SUFFER MARKEDLY. THIS POSSIBILITY HOWEVER, IT NOT CONSIDERED LIKELY EITHER BY LTG LAM OR THE US ADVISOR TEAMS SERVING IN THIS AREA. ON THE WHOLE THERE IS A GRAT CONFIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE, TEMPERED WITH RECOGNITION THAT SERIOUS PROBLEMS CAN STILL DEVELOP IN ANY PROVINCE. THE POTENTIAL FOR MAJOR TROUBLE EXISTS IN QUANG NGI PROVINCE AND IN QUANG TRI IF MAJOR REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE.

2. (S) FOLLOWING IS AN EVALUATION SUBMITTED BY DEPCORDS, MR 1 OF THE PERFORMANCE OF TERRITORIAL FORCES IN QUANG TRI DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF THE NVA OFFENSIVE.

A. THE OPENING GUNS OF THE NVA OFFENSIVE IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE ON THE 30TH OF MARCH USHERED IN AN ENTIRELY NEW PHASE OF OPERATIONS IN MR 1. FROM THE OUTSET, TERRITORIAL FORCES UNITS WERE CALLED UPON TO STAND AGAINST VNA REGULARS VASTLY SUPERIOR IN NUMBERS. FROM INCOMPLETE REPORTS AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME, IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE RF HAVE MET THIS CHALLENGE IN A HIGHLY SATISFACTORY MANNER. THE PF, AFTER THE DISORGANIZATION ENSUING FROM THE INITIAL SHOCK OF CONVENTIONAL MILITARY WARFARE, HAVE RECOVEREDN REGROUPED, AND NOW ARE BEING EMPLOYED EFFECTIVELY IN THEIR USUAL LOCAL SECURITY

PAGE 1

S E C R E T

00000001

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S E C R E T

54795

ROLE.

B. WHEN THE NVA COLUMNS MOVED SOUTHWARD INTO QUANG TRI ACROSS THE DMZ, REGIONAL FORCES UNITS WERE DEPLOYED, FOR THE MOST PART IN MOBILE SECURITY ROLES, THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE. ONE RF BN AND SRF GPS, A TOTAL FORCE OF 31 RF COS, FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN THE EVENTS WHICH TRANSPIRED SUBSEQUENT TO THE NVA ATTACK. IN THE FIRST FOUR DAYS OF FIGHTING, SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES WERE PUSHED BACK TO THE CUA VIET RIVER ON THE NORTH AND WERE CONFINED TO A TEN MILE WIDE STRIP OF THE COASTAL LOWLANDS. THE DISTRICTS OF CAM LO, HUONG HOA, AND GIO LINH WERE SWEEPED ALONG WITH THE RETREAT OF 3D DIVISION REGULARS.

C. DESPITE THE INITIAL RETREAT, REGIONAL FORCES UNITS HAVE PERFORMED WELL IN ACTION AGAINST NVA UNITS. THE 105TH RF BN, AFTER DELAYING NVA UNITS DRIVING SOUTH IN GIO LINH, WITHDREW TO POSITIONS ALONG THE CUA VIET RIVER BETWEEN DONG HA AND THE OCEAN, FROM WHENCE THEY HAVE REPULSED NUMEROUS ENEMY ATTACKS, SOME SUPPORTED BY LIGHT TANKS. ON THE 4TH OF APRIL, THE 105TH RF BN, THE 3D RF GP AND THE 17TH ARVN CAV (UNDER SECTOR OPCON) THREW BACK AN ENEMY BATTALION ATTEMPTING TO CROSS THE RIVER, INFLECTING HEAVY CASUALTIES.

D. OTHER RF UNITS HAVE DONE EQUALLY AS WELL. THE 1KST RF GP WAS ENGAGED IN MOBILE OPERATIONS IN THE AREA SOUTHWEST OF QL 1 BETWEEN QUANG TRI CITY AND MY CHANH AT THE TIME OF THE ATTACK. THE GROUP CONTACTED AN ENEMY FORCE ON THE 5TH OF APRIL, INFLECTING HEAVY CASUALTIES ON THE ENEMY. THE 1ST RF GROUP CONTINUES TO CONDUIT MOBILE OPERATION IN THAT AREA. DURING THE OPENING HOURS OF THE INVASION, THE FOUR COMPANIES OF THE 3D RF GROUP ON BRAVO 2 ACTUALLY WITNESSED THE HEAVY NVA ARTILLERY ATTACK AGAINST 3D DIVISION TROOPS ON NEARBY ALPHA 2. THREE HOURS AFTER WATCHING THE FORMER ALPHA 2 DEFENDERS RETREAT PAST THEIR POSITIONS, THE MEN OF THE 3D RF GROUP STOOD AND REPULSED AN ESTIMATED TWO NVA COMPANIES, KILLING 106 AND CAPTURING ONE POW AND 36 WEAPONS BEFORE BEING ORDERED WITHDRAW. THE 3D RF GROUP NOW OPERATES EAST AND SOUTHEAST OF QUANG TRI CITY. THE 11TH RF GROUP WAS DEPLOYED IN THE VICINITY OF QUANG TRI CITY WHERE THEY HAD REPEATED ENEMY CONTACTS FROM THE 1ST OF THE 10TH OF APRIL. THE 20 AND THE 26TH RF GROUP INITIALLY WERE DEFENDING IN THE VICINITY OF DONG HA AND CAM LO. ELEMENTS OF THESE TWO GROUPS DELAYED FOUR TRUCKLOADS OF NVA SOLDIERS MOUNTED IN ARVN TRUCKS AT A POSITION NORTH OF THE BRIDGE AT CAM LO UNTIL THE BRIDGE COULD BE BLOWN. THIS DELAYING ACTION ALLOWED ARVN UNITS TO REORGANIZE SOUTH OF THE RIVER AND ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE DEFENSE.

E. WHILE NONE OF THE RF UNITS WERE HIT BY HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE

PAGE 2

S E C R E T

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54795

OR THE LARGE TANK ASSAULTS WHICH STRUCK AT 3D DIVISION POSITIONS, THEY WERE, NEVERTHELESS, SUBJECTED TO UNFAMILIAR MASSIVE CONVENTIONAL INFANTRY ATTACKS. THEY CARRIED OUT THEIR MISSION OF COUNTERING THESE ATTACKS IN THE FACE OF THE TREMENDOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL SHOCK OF SEEING ARVN REGULARS BATTERED BY HEAVY ENEMY ARTILLERY AND TANKS. RF UNITS SUFFERED A TOTAL OF 886 CASUALTIES DURING THE PERIOD FROM THE 30TH OF MARCH TO THE 12 OF APRIL, DROPPING THEIR STRENGTH FROM 5,048 TO 4,162 -- A LOSS OF 17 PERCENT. DESPITE THIS ALL RF COMPANIES ARE CURRENTLY EVALUATED AS COMBAT EFFECTIVE.

F. QUANG TRI PROVINCE PF PLATOONS LOCATED IN GIO LINH, DONG HAI, CAM LO AND HUONG TRA DISTRICTS, WERE FORCED TO WITHDRAW BY THE SPEED AND SHOCK OF THE NVA ATTACK. COMMAND AND CONTROL BROKE DOWN, AND MANY INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS FLED TO THE SOUTH WITH THEIR FAMILIES. INITIAL PF LOSSES IN THE INVADDED DISTRICTS RAN AS HIGH AS 50 PERCENT. HOWEVER, BY 12 APRIL MANY PF SOLDIERS HAD RETURNED TO THEIR UNITS AFTER HAVING MOVED THEIR FAMILIES TO SECURE AREAS AND TOTAL PF STRENGTH IN QUANG TRI ON THAT DATE WAS 3,708 COMPARED TO 5,850 PRESENT FOR DUTY ON THE 1ST OF MARCH. THE PF PLATOONS FROM GIO LINH, CAM LO AND HUONG TRA ARE BEING REORGANIZED IN THE VICINITY OF QUANG TRI CITY WHERE THEY WILL BE EMPLOYED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO REPLACE RF UNITS IN STATIC MISSIONS, SUCH AS SECURITY OF BRIDGES. PF PLATOONS FROM THIEU PHONG, DONG HA, HAI LINH, AND HAI LANG DISTRICTS ARE CONTINUING TO CONDUCT NORMAL SMALL UNIT OPERATIONS.

G. TERRITORIAL ARTILLERY PLATOONS HAVE DONE YEOMAN SERVICE FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE ATTACK. THE LOSS OF A GREAT DEAL OF THE 3D ARVN DIVISION ARTILLERY PLACED AN INCREASED LOAD ON THESE SMALL FIRE SUPPORT UNITS. ALL TERRITORIAL ARTILLERY PLATOONS HAVE BEEN IN CONTINUOUS ACTION SINCE THE 30TH OF MARCH WITH NO TUBES LOST. ADDITIONALLY, NAVAL GUNFIRE TEAMS ARE WORKING WITH RF COMPANIES IN TRIEU PHONG DISTRICT AND THIS HAS IMPROVED MORALE IN THAT AREA. RF AND PF UNITS HAVE ALSO BEEN SUPPLIED WITH LAWS TO HELP RESIST POSSIBLE ARMOR ASSAULTS.

H. AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THEIR SUCCESSSES AGAINST THE NVA REGULARS, TERRITORIAL FORCES HAVE ESTABLISHED NOT ONLY STRONG CONFIDENCE BUT ALSO HIGH MORALE. THEIR KILL RATIO FOR THIS PERIOD IS NEARLY 16 TO 1, AND THEY HAVE CAPTURED 21 PWIS, PLUS 262 AK47'S, 43 MG'S, 21 84'S, 2AAMG'S (12.7MM) ALONG WITH OTHER WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT.

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PAGE 3

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